

Essex Bat Group Annual General Meeting

Friday 1st March 2013 7.45pm start
Boreham Village Hall

With talks on local bat projects,
displays and refreshments

Please support your bat group by coming along to our AGM

This year we will have a series of short talks by local project co-ordinators,
covering some established projects and our plans for the future

Weald Bat Project - Graham Hart & Duncan Fisher

EBG Priorities & Church Projects - Robin Cottrill

Bat Care: A Summary of 2012 - Jan Ragg

There will also be displays, information, tea, coffee and biscuits and a chance
to mingle with your committee and fellow members

Venue details: Boreham Village Hall, Main Road, Boreham, near Chelmsford CM3 3JD

EBG 2013: Priorities & Projects.....	Page 2
National Bat Monitoring Programme.....	Page 3
The Joy of Bat Walks.....	Page 5
News in Brief.....	Page 6
Events.....	Page 7
EBG clothing.....	Page 7
Contacts.....	Page 8
Membership form.....	Page 8

Priorities and projects for 2013

This winter has been a productive one in terms of ideas and plans for future bat work in Essex. In producing our first EBG Action Plan last year, the Committee began the process of adopting a strategic approach to the group's work. This has continued with the recent formation of a sub-committee which has identified the group's priorities for 2013 and will soon be looking at the next five years. At the same time, some new opportunities for research have arisen and several new projects have either been planned or are already getting underway.

Overall Priorities

- To further our understanding of bats in Essex;
- To support members by providing opportunities for involvement and learning skills.

Priority Projects

- **Church Projects.** EBG leads the way in England in terms of good working relations with church authorities. To support our licensed volunteers, who advise on taking bats into account during repairs and other works, we are attempting to gather more information about the use of churches by bats. We are promoting participation in our Churchyard Survey and working with EWT's Churchyard Conservation Project and a research student looking at church roosts. Contact Robin Cottrill - robin.cottrill@gmail.com;

- **Weald Country Park.** Our long running project at Brentwood has become our primary site-based project and is an important source of experience for new members. Having recently secured OPAL funding, the project is set to expand this year, with training workshops provided and a commitment to involve interested folk from outside EBG. See page 7 for survey dates.

- **Training and experience.** We aim to increase the capacity of the group and its members by providing more opportunities to gain experience and training in, for example, use of bat detectors, sound analysis, leading bat walks and tree assessment. Dates to be announced.

New Projects

- **Hatfield Forest.** We are resuming surveys at this unique site this summer after an absence of several years. Ten species have been recorded here and some roosts located, including barbastelle and Daubenton's. Contact Colin Edwards - edwards.colin1@sky.com;

- **Hylands Park.** A group of local members will be conducting surveys at this parkland site at Chelmsford. Contact Pat Hatch - pathatch@live.co.uk;

- **Nathusius' Project.** This will be the first year of a study of the status of Nathusius' pipistrelle in Essex. We hope to include radio tracking as well as coastal detector surveys and will be advised and supported by Nathusius' expert Daniel Hargreaves. Contact Pat Hatch;

- **Tracking captives.** The bat care network is over-wintering two bats which we have identified as potential subjects for radio tracking when they are released in the spring. They are a male barbastelle and male Leisler's, both from the north west of the county. Contact Pat.

Established projects will continue, such as Dengie, Hanningfield, the Pillbox Project and work at Grays quarries, as will public bat walks, stalls and other events and, of course, our indomitable Bat Care Network. We are also encouraging members to take part in the National Bat Monitoring Programme surveys (see article on page 3). With numerous opportunities to get involved, we hope to hear from you if you would like to help with any bat group activities, to receive training, advice and experience or to contribute your skills and ideas.

National Bat Monitoring Programme

Ella Barnett relates her part in this important set of national surveys

I first carried out detector surveys two years ago for my university dissertation, something I have written about in this newsletter before. Since then I have been addicted to listening to bats and so when I found out about the Bat Conservation Trust's National Bat Monitoring Programme I jumped right on it! Unfortunately it was late in the summer of 2011 and I was living in Southampton and so I only took on the Nathusius' Pipistrelle Survey. I had been allocated a privately owned lake and had to get permission from the owner - a terrifying prospect for me! Luckily though the man was very obliging and allowed me to survey his lake. Even though I didn't get much success Nathusius' Pipistrelle-wise there were many other pipistrelles and Daubenton's bats. I felt a great sense of achievement as these records were from a brand new location, never surveyed for bats before!

This year I was back in Essex and signed up to the Field and Waterway surveys; two NBMP surveys I missed out on last year. I was given my location for them and set to work on organising a route. The Field Survey came first, in July. My location was in West Tilbury, an area full of agricultural farmer's fields. Thankfully there were many public footpaths, with which I could navigate a roughly triangular shape. To get the best results, though, I needed permission off of a local farmer to walk through a couple of his fields. Unfortunately he wasn't too keen on this idea! I didn't let this dishearten me though, as I'd had a lot of interest from the local residents nearby that I'd spoken to in order to warn them about the late night activity I was planning around their homes. Therefore, my route was re-arranged to two sides of a triangle - the best I could do! This took me along footpaths and down Fort Road which goes between the middle of agricultural fields.

After walking the route during the day (with my mum, in the pouring rain) I set to organising the first survey. The NBMP requires you to complete two surveys at one site and collect data on the weather conditions; rain, wind and cloud cover are easy to judge and to record the temperature I used the thermometer out of my mum's fridge! So I was all set.

On July 11th a fellow bat enthusiast and I set off on our adventure! And, amazingly, as soon as I'd turned on my bat detector, there it was, the call of a Noctule flying over! It turns out the field to the north of us seemed to be a regular feeding ground for a couple of Noctules. When we reached a little further on we were rewarded with the sight of one flitting backwards and forwards, quite high in the air above the open field.

The rest of the route was not so fruitful, with only the odd bat passing over, until we got to Gun Hill that was. This was at the edge of a footpath in a field with a few horses in it. The field had a tall hedgerow and although we couldn't see anything there was a lot of Common Pipistrelle activity. Once we passed through the hedgerow to the road, we could see that both sides of the road had this tall hedgerow, almost creating a corridor which the bats seemed to be loving!

Continuing on down Fort Road there were very few signs of bats. The most exciting thing was a call of a possible Leisler's bat on the second night. After analysing my calls at a later date it turns out we had also heard one on the first night and so maybe there was one using this area to pass through! I'd not heard a Leisler's before and this was also the first location I'd heard a noctule for any period of time, so I really enjoyed this survey!

The Waterway Survey is designed to listen out for Daubenton's bats, a species known for its big feet and trawling techniques along water bodies. My site was near Bulphan and once again I set to creating a route and finding someone to help me with my survey (unfortunately he was scared of the dark and wasn't used to walking around fields at night time, something which I didn't realise I'd become accustomed to!). We managed to get on and he ended up enjoying himself as a Serotine could be seen flying (very slowly compared to other bats) backwards and forwards over the river. I thought that the habitat was quite a good habitat for bats, steep, unmanaged grassy banks one side and an unkempt hedgerow on the other; however activity was surprisingly low, even from Pipistrelles until we got to some of the larger trees. Not one Daubenton's was heard but, because I sent off my recordings, I'm hoping the activity I did pick up will be of use anyway.

I would like to encourage everyone to take part in future NBMP surveys as they are so important in monitoring sites which bats use and it is very satisfying surveying a site that has not been surveyed previously. Other surveys are available for people to take part in, including colony counts and sunrise/sunset surveys (sitting in your garden at dusk or dawn and seeing if any bats fly overhead) and woodland surveys. Information about NBMP surveys can be found

at www.bats.org.uk. A summary of the 2012 survey results can be seen at www.bats.org.uk/pages/summer_survey_summary_2012

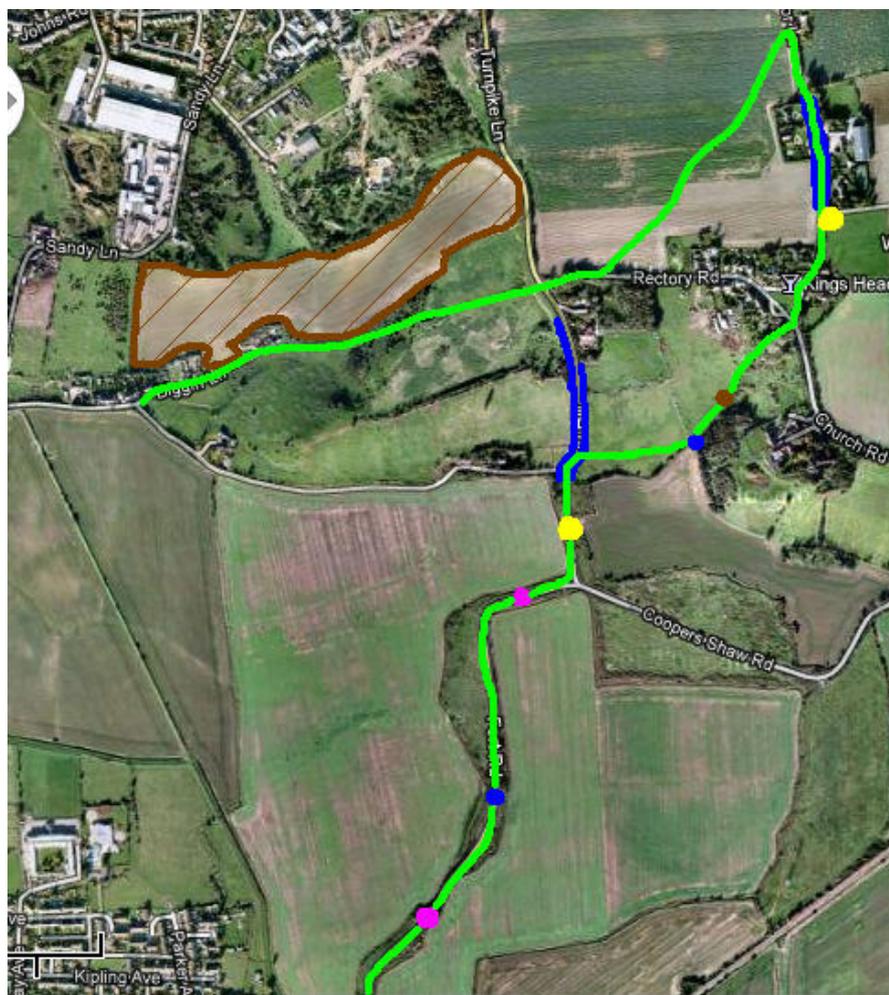


Fig 1: Field Survey, West Tilbury

- The green line represents the route we took.
- Blue dots and lines indicate Common Pipistrelle activity.
- Pink dots indicate Soprano Pipistrelle activity.
- Brown dots indicate Noctule activity.
- The field outlined in brown is an area where Noctules were seen and heard on both nights.
- Yellow dots indicate possible Leisler's activity.

The Joy of Bat Walks

Robin Cottrill with guidance and encouragement for potential bat walk leaders like you

A few years ago Colchester Borough Council first asked Essex Bat Group to run bat walks in its parks and Country parks to meet an ever growing public demand. I happened to be in the right place at the right time to be asked to lead some walks. If Colchester is typical, there is an enormous demand from people to see and experience bats. The early Colchester bat walks were over subscribed, with over 100 people chasing a an upper limit of 50 places (too many, but that's another story), and eventually the number of walks was doubled to accommodate.

Could EBG members do more to meet the demand? I hope that by trying to explain that you don't need a high degree of technical expertise, just a willingness to try to communicate your interest, I may encourage a few more members to lead bat walks.

Here are some suggested guidelines:

Work with the community The target audience is the general public, not people who are already Bat Group members! A bat walk for the local community, whether it's in town, village or city, if well advertised and promoted, will generate masses of interest. Scout and guide groups are particularly keen, especially as they meet in the evenings.

Let as many people use detectors as possible EBG has a collection of nine Magenta Bat 4 detectors which are available for bat walks. This is an easy to use detector with a little built in light, which captivates children and enables you to keep track of the detectors (and their users). They have a speaker which relays the sounds received to people in the vicinity, so a spread of one detector to say four people gives a maximum group size of about 36 (this is also a good limit for talking without straining your voice). I think it is essential for people to have this hands on experience, especially for children. Some of the most rewarding comments have come from teenagers ("that was well wicked" being my favourite).

The process of explaining to people how a detector works gives an opportunity for light relief. Asking a child to demonstrate the ultrasound generated by an unshaven Dad scratching his chin, with the detector switched on and off, works well.

Do a recce Make sure you know where you're going and preferably, that somebody else is taking responsibility for health and safety aspects - i.e. providing lighting, people to follow at the end of the walk, etc. This has never been a problem with the Colchester walks, which are organized and guided by the Rangers, but it would be difficult to do that job as well as pointing out bats. If you want to find out, really seriously, what bats are using a site, don't expect to do this on the walk. You'll need all your resources to keep listening for bats and talking to people.

Plan your route It's a good move to plan your walk to finish at a pond or similar water body about an hour after sunset. Water attracts more bats than other features, and if you have a lantern with a red filter (EBG have one for use on bat walks) you can end your walk with a mini firework display where the bats are the fireworks and also the background music. Why a red filter? The bats can't see red light so it's much less disturbing than white light.

Time your lead-in Timing is important. People usually arrive early for walks. You'll need to programme a chatty introductory talk of, say, 20 mins, to start about sunset and finish about the time bats start appearing (with pips about 15 mins after sunset). But while you're talking, you can have a detector tuned to 25 kHz to tell you when there's a Noctule flying over - giving the start of your walk a real boost.

Talk comfortably Ask the group to stand close enough to hear you without you having to shout. Try to make sure everybody feels included in your talk. Ask questions, especially of children, and don't always ask the one with his or her hand up first! You will probably be surprised and pleased by the level of interest from your audience - the most unlikely-seeming people are really interested in bats. Don't worry about the extent of your knowledge - on the whole people are just delighted that somebody is giving the time to show bats to them. Give a bit of general background about bats, tell people where you're taking them and what you expect to find.

Don't be disappointed If you can't find many bats. Sometimes the weather is against you, and few bats can be found. Most people are very aware that nature is unpredictable. Especially for children, the opportunity to scramble around a wood in their wellies with torches, will probably be a worthwhile experience in itself. Use the detectors to point out other forms of life such as grasshoppers or bush-cricket (for many adults, the calls of these insects are outside the hearing range without a bat detector).

Training The Bat Conservation Trust runs training courses for bat walk leaders and EBG will be hosting one before the summer season in 2013 so if I haven't put you off and you're still keen, watch this space, enrol on the course, get out and show people those bats!

News in brief

- A maternity roost of barbastelle bats has been discovered in Essex for the first time to our knowledge. The roost confirms the presence of a breeding population in the north west of the county, an area in which the species was already known to occur. Coincidentally, a male barbastelle from the Saffron Walden area came into care last year and we are planning to radio track him upon release in the spring in the hope of locating more Essex roosts;
- 25 people took part in a weekend of tree assessment at Weald Country Park in January. A good number of potential roost features were recorded;
- 14 Natterer's and Daubenton's bats were found during a survey of Grays Tunnel in December, two years after the site was enhanced, at a time when typical counts were 1 or 2 bats and there were few roost features;
- More than 65% of 2km squares on the Dengie Peninsula were surveyed by the Dengie Bat Project in its first year. This year's activities will include completion of the grid square survey, an investigation into the use of ponds on Dengie Marshes, emergence counts of the Natterer's maternity roost at Bradwell and detector surveys of the wider area around the roost;
- The roost of Daubenton's bats found in Tunnel 3 (Grays) last summer and reported in the last edition of the newsletter as a maternity roost, may not have been a maternity roost after all. My thanks to John and Madeleine for pointing out the error and my apologies for the mistaken assumption [Ed.].

EBG Events

Further events will be organised shortly and notified to members

Colchester Bat Walks (in partnership with Colchester Borough Council)

Saturday 13th April - Colchester Castle Park. 19.30 start. Booking is essential 01206 282920. £4 adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Meet at the Cafe in the Park.

Saturday 4th May - Colchester Castle Park. 20.15 start. Booking is essential 01206 282920. £4 adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Meet at the Cafe in the Park.

Friday 10th May - High Woods Country Park, Colchester. 20.15 start. Booking is essential 01206 282920. £4 for adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Meet at the Visitor Centre off Turner Road.

Saturday 3rd August - Lexden Park, Colchester. Exceptional views of bats often gained over the lake. 20.15 start. Booking is essential 01206 282920. £4 for adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Meet at the car park.

Saturday 10th August - Colchester Cemetery. Mersea Road, Colchester. 20.15 start. Booking is essential 01206 282920. £4 for adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Meet at the Chapel.

Saturday 17th August - Colchester Castle Park. 20.00 start. Booking essential 01206 282920. £4 adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Meet at the Cafe in the Park.

Weald Bat Project, Weald Country Park, Brentwood

Survey dates (Wednesday evenings): 10th April, 24th April, 8th May, 5th June, 24th July, 14th August, 4th September, 18th September, 16th October.

Sound analysis evenings: Weds 19th June, Weds 6th November.

Learn new skills in practical bat surveying (or build on existing experience), attend sound analysis workshops and contribute towards important conservation work. There will be a limited number of detectors and recorders available to borrow. Full support and supervision will be provided by experienced members. Contact Graham Hart: thehart@btinternet.com.

Hatfield Forest, Takeley, nr Bishop's Stortford Friday 19th April - Detector survey.

This year sees the resumption of surveys at this bat rich site after a gap of several years, extending and building on past surveys to give us a fuller picture of the site's bat community. Further surveys, including monitoring of barbastelle and Daubenton's roosts, will follow the initial survey in April. Contact Colin Edwards: edwards.colin1@sky.com.

Church Survey Event Monday 13th May 8pm. Church of St Mary, Great Bardfield, near Braintree. A short talk followed by refreshments and a chance to watch and listen to bats inside and outside the church. Contact Sylvia Jiggins: r.jiggins@btconnect.com

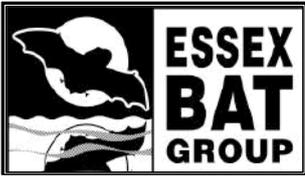
EBG Clothing

Essex Bat Group clothing is now available, featuring our evocative emblem of a bat flying over moonlit water

Sweat Shirt £16; Polo Shirt £15; T-shirt £12; Fleece £25; Gillet £20; Cap £9

Please send your order to Sue Burton, 2 Mellish Way. Hornchurch. Essex RM11 2GU, enclosing a cheque made payable to EBG for the total amount, including £2.35 per item post and packaging. Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery. If you can collect your clothing from Harlow, Hornchurch or Ingatestone please let Sue know and omit the postage charge.





Committee members and other contacts

Bat Conservation Trust
Partner Group



EBG Committee

Sue Burton, Press and Publicity Officer 01277 356191 Remusoffice@aol.com
Robin Cottrill, Vice Chair & Minutes Secretary 01206 826418 robin.cottrill@gmail.com
Graham Hart, Projects Officer thehart@btinternet.com
Pat Hatch, Chair & Newsletter Editor 01206 824115 pathatch@live.co.uk
Roger & Sylvia Jiggins, Joint Secretaries 01376 324311 r.jiggins@btconnect.com
Helen Miller, Membership Secretary 07736 932816 hmiller@bats.org.uk
Kim Wallis, Treasurer kimrwallis@hotmail.com

Other Contacts

Events Programme Rebecca Gibson beckyg@essexwt.org.uk
Recorder/Roost Counting Group Peter Lane 01376 343567 p.lane@talktalk.net
Webmaster Keith Rawlings 01376 329279 keith@recelectronics.co.uk
Bat Care Network Jan Ragg 01279 418393 / 07734 265571 jan.ragg@talk21.com
iBats/Car Survey Ralph Cordey 01245 225889 ralph@cordey.fsnet.co.uk
Weald Bat Project Graham Hart thehart@btinternet.com
Hatfield Forest Colin Edwards - edwards.colin1@sky.com

Membership Form

You can use this form to renew your membership
or recruit a friend

We are indebted to our members for their support and enthusiasm. If you would like to help your local bats, please fill in the form and send to: Helen Miller, EBG Membership Secretary, 16 Hogarth Avenue, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8BE

Yes, I would love to become a member of E.B.G. for 2013*, 2014, 2015 (delete as appropriate)

Name _____ Address _____

Email _____ Telephone _____

Using e-mail means we can send your newsletter and other correspondence electronically, saving on postage and stationery so more of your membership money is used for bat conservation. Your e-mail address will not be passed on to any other organisation or used for any other purpose.

How did you hear about EBG? (internet, local bat walk, EWT, friend etc): _____

Please tick as appropriate:

Standard membership of the group is just £5 for 1 year

OR a *SPECIAL OFFER* of £12 for 3 years

DONATION: I would also like to make a donation of £ _____

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ (made payable to Essex Bat Group)